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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

DESP. NO. 961

FROM : Amembassy STOCKHOLM

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

DATE February 25, 1957
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REF : Joint Weeka No. 6, February 8, 1957.

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SUBJECT: Soviet Union Alleges Raoul WALLENBERG Died in 1947.

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Summary

No story in contemporary Swedish history has received the press and radio play given the Soviet allegation that missing Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg died in a Moscow prison in July 1947. Deputy Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko handed a note to Swedish Ambassador SOHLMAN on February 6, 1957, explaining that after an intensive investigation "the conclusion should be drawn" that Raoul Wallenberg died of a heart condition on July 17, 1947, according to a physician's report to Minister of State Security ABAKUMOV (liquidated in the Beria purge). The Soviets blamed Abakumov for concealing Wallenberg's fate and expressed their regrets. Prime Minister Erlander presided over a press conference at 4 p.m. on February 7 at which Foreign Minister Undén and former Foreign Office Secretary General Arne Lundberg were present to give the details of the Soviet reply on Wallenberg to the Swedish press. The news was first released to the Swedish public by radio at 7 p.m. on February 7. An official Swedish Government declaration issued on February 7 stated, "It must be regretted that the Soviet reply contained such meager information." Strong doubts were voiced throughout the Swedish press about the veracity of the Soviet account which was deprecated as "too convenient" in fixing Wallenberg's death at the point Swedish evidence concerning his whereabouts in Russia stopped. A white paper is to be published amplifying the material given to the press on February 6, (this press background material forms the basis of the main story that follows).

1. The Soviet Memorandum of February 6, 1957.

The Soviet reply of February 6, 1957, was the first definite news from Moscow on Wallenberg's fate since his disappearance in 1945. A long series of Swedish notes and inquiries over the past eleven years had gone either unanswered by the Soviet Government or resulted in flat disclaimers of any knowledge of Wallenberg's whereabouts or fate. This long overdue Soviet reply of February 6, 1957, was based

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exclusively on a report said to have been found in the archives of a Moscow prison hospital and addressed to the former Soviet Minister of State Security Abakumov according to which Wallenberg was believed to have died from myocardiac infarct (coronary thrombosis). The body was said to have been cremated without autopsy. Wallenberg's imprisonment and the false information concerning him that had previously been supplied to the Soviet Foreign Ministry and from it to the Swedish Government was said to have been the result of Abakumov's "criminal activities", (Abakumov was executed in the Beria purge in 1954). The medical officer of the Ljublanka Prison who reported Wallenberg's death to Abakumov died in May 1953, according to the Soviet memorandum. No more documents or testimony on the Wallenberg case could be traced in the Soviet Union, the memorandum stated and it concluded with a few words of regret and sympathy addressed to the Swedish Government and to Wallenberg's next of kin. (Enclosure No. 1).

A Swedish Government declaration published simultaneously with the release of the text of the Soviet memorandum strongly regretted the meagerness of the information on Wallenberg's fate. Furthermore, the Swedish Government declared it expected that any further material in the case that might be found in the Soviet Union would be immediately communicated to Stockholm. (Enclosure No. 2).

2. Background Material Summarizing Swedish Government's Material on Wallenberg.

The essence of the huge amount of material in the Swedish Government's possession - mainly in the form of testimonies by German, Austrian and Italian prisoners of war released from Russia in recent years - tracing Wallenberg's whereabouts in Russia up to the middle of 1947 was handed to the press at the Government's press conference, and the full material will appear in the form of a white paper to be published toward the end of February. This material, previously submitted to the Soviet Government in connection with Prime Minister Erlander's and Interior Minister Hedlund's visit to Moscow in March-April 1956, does not include testimonies kept secret because of wishes expressed by those having testified who still have relatives or friends in Soviet-controlled countries, nor does it include material which, in the opinion of the Swedish Foreign Office, is of a nature as to cause serious consequences to other people if made available to the Russians.

The files on the Raoul Wallenberg case are reported to be the largest on any one subject ever amassed by the Foreign Office.

A list of the major Swedish diplomatic actions taken by Sweden in recent years in the Wallenberg case, and the Soviet replies, is attached. (Enclosure No. 3).

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From Stockholm

Since February 1952, after more concrete material on Wallenberg's imprisonment in Russia had been obtained through testimonies by former prisoners of war, at least 15 written and 34 oral notes and reminders had been delivered by Sweden in Moscow, without result until the Soviet note of February 6, 1957.

The material made public by the Foreign Office includes testimonies by 19 ex-prisoners of war, mainly German, Austrian and Italian, who either shared prison cells with Wallenberg and/or his Hungarian chauffeur LANGFELDER (also missing since January 1945) or who claim they were in communication with him by prison code ("tapping") in the Ljublanka and Lefortovskaya prisons in Moscow. These various testimonies have been checked and correlated, but they all end in July 1947, the last date any of these prisoners had any contact with Wallenberg.

Two Justices of the Swedish Supreme Court testified on March 2, 1956, that they had studied these various testimonies and had come to the conclusion, independently of one another, that Raoul Wallenberg was taken into custody by the Russians and had been kept prisoner in the Soviet Union. Their testimony coincided to such a degree on essential points that under Swedish law, it constitutes binding evidence. This finding by the two Swedish Justices was included in the material supplied by Prime Minister Erlander to the Soviet Government in Moscow in March-April 1956.

Of special significance, and underscored by the Foreign Office, all of those who shared cells with Wallenberg and/or Langfelder at different times were especially questioned by the Russians during the month of July 1947 concerning their knowledge of Wallenberg and his experiences, in Budapest and in Soviet captivity; after these interrogations they were all placed in isolated cells with no means of communication with other prisoners. In the words of the Foreign Office: "The treatment accorded these prisoners after they had been questioned suggests that the Soviet authorities sought to prevent as far as possible any further spreading of knowledge of the Swedish diplomat."

Testimony given by other ex-prisoners of war claiming contact with Wallenberg even after July 1947 is also known to be in the possession of the Swedish Foreign Office but has not been included in the material released for publication because of lack of full and definite proof of its accuracy. Also, numerous alleged testimonies have been discarded as falsifications.

The unparalleled Swedish public and press concern over Raoul Wallenberg's fate kept alive over the past twelve years demands explanation, for it has been a significant factor in Swedish-Soviet relations.

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Wallenberg's special mission in Budapest – he was not a career diplomat, but enjoyed diplomatic status as Secretary of Legation – was to seek to save Hungarian Jews threatened with annihilation by the Szalasi regime. By his energy, initiative and courage, it is estimated he saved the lives of some 20,000 people. "No other Swede in our history has had the opportunity in such a direct and personal way to save human lives by the thousands", said former Secretary General of the Foreign Office Arne Lundberg in his commentary over the Swedish radio on February 8, 1957.

Neutral during the war, Sweden did not experience, as many of the belligerent nations did, mass disappearance of nationals, so that the fate of one single Swedish citizen, particularly one engaged in humanitarian relief work, went to the heart of the general public.

Sweden acted as protective power for the Soviet Union in Hungary during the war and for that reason expected sympathetic treatment of her diplomatic personnel by the Russians, (for a short time, when the Red Army marched into Budapest, Wallenberg appears to have acted as Swedish Chargé d'Affaires).

The blunt Soviet denials, over all these years, of any knowledge of Wallenberg's whereabouts or very existence aroused to an increasing extent Swedish indignation as belief turned into conviction that Wallenberg was held prisoner in Russia, with all that this entailed of suffering and horror.

Another aspect of this growing indignation among the Swedish public concerned the implied suspicion that the Foreign Office had not at an early stage conducted its investigations concerning Wallenberg with the necessary concern. Apparently on this assumption, a special committee of private citizens was formed (including relatives and friends of Wallenberg's) to conduct its own search for the missing diplomat and, in general, to speed up and activate the official investigations. Swedish officialdom did not relish this implied criticism of its efforts, and there were occasions of direct clashes between the Wallenberg Committee and, notably, Foreign Minister Undén who appears to have attached more faith in the Soviet assurances that could discover no information about Wallenberg than subsequent events warranted. In any event, public impatience with the negative Soviet attitude increased through Undén's apparent inclination, at least until 1951/52, to accept the Soviet version that Wallenberg was not to be found on Russian territory.

As Italian, German and other prisoners of war began to be released from Russia, toward the end of 1951, reports came through which appeared accurate about Wallenberg being or having been in Soviet imprisonment, and from then on, apparently with the Wallenberg Committee as a driving force, the Foreign Office pursued the case with added energy. Primarily responsible for this renewed activity was

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Arne Lundberg, who became Secretary General of the Foreign Office in 1951, and who is known to have taken on the Wallenberg case with strong personal interest and resourcefulness. A new series of notes were addressed to Moscow, beginning with a démarche of February 11, 1952, but the Soviet reply, when given at all, was always a reference to Vice Foreign Minister Vishinsky's note of August 18, 1947, disclaiming any knowledge of Wallenberg and his whereabouts.

A turning point occurred in April 1956 when Prime Minister Erlander visited Moscow. He had then occasion to present the Swedish views in person to Bulganin, Khrushchev and Molotov, and he extracted from them the promise that an exhaustive investigation would be made to ascertain Wallenberg's fate.

Again, however, the Russians saw fit to try the Swedish patience, for despite repeated reminders it was not until ten months later, on February 6, 1957, that the Soviet reply was given, stating that Wallenberg, on the strength of the meager evidence supplied, could be expected to have died in the Ljublanka Prison in Moscow on July 17, 1947.

3. Swedish Press Skepticism Toward Veracity of Soviet Explanation of February 6.

The long-overdue Soviet reply definitely did not satisfy Swedish opinion. Press commentaries were unanimous in describing the Soviet evidence, comprising one single document issued by a person now deceased and addressed to another also deceased (executed), as inadequate. The press also pointed to the vague, almost non-committal wording of the Soviet note, which stated there was "reason to look upon the document as referring to Raoul Wallenberg" and that "the conclusion should be drawn that Wallenberg died in July 1947". Main emphasis in the commentaries, however, was placed on the "convenient" timing of Wallenberg's alleged death with the testimonies in Swedish possession whereby Wallenberg was last heard of in July 1947, when prisoners of war had been interrogated by the Russians concerning Wallenberg and thereafter placed in isolated cells. The timing was also held to be interesting in view of the fact that in July 1947 Swedish Ambassador Sohlman in Moscow had made a renewed démarche to the Soviet Foreign Office, to which Vishinsky had replied by his negative note of August 18, 1947.

Although few commentators doubted that Raoul Wallenberg must now be dead, the Soviet version as to the timing and other circumstances met with profound skepticism and dissatisfaction in all quarters. Even the alleged cause of death - "myocarditic infarct" - was strongly questioned, and prominent Swedish heart specialists immediately declared this type of heart ailment highly improbable in a man of Wallenberg's age (he would have been 36 in

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July 1947).

The attempt on the part of the present Soviet rulers to cast all the blame for Wallenberg's arrest and imprisonment on the Stalinist regime and its hirelings was neither accepted by the press, which held that the treatment of an innocent neutral diplomat in the described fashion cast reflection on the whole Soviet system, with its inherent terror and disregard for human life, irrespective of who may for the moment be the rulers.

For all of the above reasons, there was a strong press urge that the Swedish Government not let the matter rest but that investigations continue in search of new evidence on Wallenberg's fate and that, meanwhile, new representations be made in Moscow demanding more information on why Wallenberg was imprisoned and what treatment he had been given.

Obviously, the Swedish Government is resolved to pursue its efforts to bring about full clarity in the Wallenberg case. This was implied in the immediate Government declaration following publication of the Soviet note on February 7 as well as by statement to the press by the Foreign Office that a Swedish reply to Moscow was under preparation.

Pending such a new Swedish démarche, Communist Ny Dag on February 19 featured an interview which its Moscow correspondent had with Gromyko, the new Soviet Foreign Minister, in which the latter was quoted as having declared that nothing further could be obtained concerning Wallenberg's fate beyond what was contained in the Soviet note of February 6, and that " the Wallenberg case should be considered closed".

Rather than quieting Swedish public opinion, this statement by Gromyko has further activated the demand here for the full story on the fate of an almost idolized Swedish citizen fallen the victim of a totalitarian police state. END OFFICIAL USE ONLY

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4. The Mystery of the Wallenberg Mission

Raoul Wallenberg, a cousin once removed of Jacob and Marcus Wallenberg, the bankers, was assigned to the Swedish legation in Budapest in 1945 in a special capacity to exercise good offices on behalf of the Jews who were being subjected to Nazi atrocities. All accounts claim that he issued Swedish documents and passports to many Jews in Hungary in order to aid them in escaping the Nazi terror. He was supplied with 260,000 Swedish crowns some time in 1945 by the United States War Refugee Board in Stockholm, (according to information in the files of Embassy Stockholm which was

conveyed to the Swedish Government by note from the Department of State in Washington on May 1, 1951). A sum of 10,000 Swedish crowns was given Wallenberg through a third person in Stockholm to finance his travel to Budapest. Subsequent payments of 50,000 and 200,000 Swedish crowns were deposited to his account in the Stockholm Enskilda Bank. The 200,000 Swedish crown payment was given by the American Joint Distribution Committee and since Wallenberg used "very little of it, the remainder was later returned to the Committee".

A current explanation of why Wallenberg was liquidated by the Russians was because they believed he was an American spy. Rudolph PHILIPP, the Secretary of the Wallenberg Committee, (a group of distinguished Swedish citizens), once claimed that Wallenberg had been on a secret mission for President Roosevelt. Many Swedish officials have noted to the reporting officer that Wallenberg was a close friend of former American Minister Herschel JOHNSON and that he was the one who is supposed to have picked Wallenberg for his "dangerous mission".

In any event, there is no concrete evidence available so far to clarify whether or not Wallenberg was engaged in espionage activities or a secret or confidential mission for any foreign power.

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For the Ambassador:

Joseph Sweeney

Joseph Sweeney
First Secretary of Embassy

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MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED FEBRUARY 6, 1957, BY SOVIET VICE FOREIGN MINISTER ANDREI GROMYKO TO SWEDISH AMBASSADOR IN MOSCOW ROLF SOHLMAN IN THE RAOUL WALLENBERG CASE

(Translation of text as released by the Swedish Foreign Office to the press February 7, 1957)

In pursuance of the Swedish Government's request, the Soviet Government instructed the pertinent Soviet authorities to peruse the material concerning Raoul Wallenberg which had been received from Swedish quarters at the Swedish-Soviet negotiations in Moscow in March - April 1956 and also in May 1956. In the course of perusal and testing of the said material, the Soviet authorities have made a careful search of the archives which refer to the accounting for prisoners and to investigation questions ("Sledstvenye Dela"), for the purpose of finding possible information on Wallenberg. Similarly, many persons have been questioned who could have had anything to do with the circumstances mentioned in the material received from Sweden.

As a result of these measures, however, it has not been possible to find any information whatsoever concerning Wallenberg's sojourn in the Soviet Union. It has transpired that none of those heard knew any person by the name of Wallenberg. In this connection, the competent Soviet authorities have undertaken a search page by page of the archive documents from all wards in certain prisons. As a result of such search of archive documents from the health service in the Ljublanka Prison, a document has been found which there is good reason to consider as referring to Raoul Wallenberg.

This document has the form of a hand-written report, addressed to the former Minister of the State Security in the Soviet Union, Abakumov, and written by the head of the health service at the said prison, A.L. Smoltsov, reading as follows:

"I report that the prisoner Wallenberg, who is well known to you, died suddenly in his cell this night, probably as the result of a heart attack. Pursuant to instructions given by you that I personally have Wallenberg under my care, I request approval to make an autopsy with a view to establishing the cause of death.

"July 17, 1947.
"Smoltsov,
"Chief of the Prison's Sanitary Ward,
"Colonel in the Medical Service."

On this report, the following notation is found, in Smoltsov's handwriting: "I have personally notified the Minister and it has been ordered that the body be cremated without autopsy. July 17. Smoltsov."

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It has not been possible to find any other information whatsoever having the character of document or testimony, all the more since the aforementioned A. L. Smoltsov died on May 7, 1953. On the strength of what has been cited above, the conclusion should be drawn that Wallenberg died in July 1947.

Raoul Wallenberg was apparently arrested along with other persons in the area for military operations by Soviet troops. At the same time, it may be considered indisputable that Wallenberg's subsequent detention in prison as well as the incorrect information about him supplied by certain former leaders of the security organs to the Soviet Union's Foreign fMinistry over a period of years comprised the result of Abakumov's criminal activities. In connection with gross crimes committed by him, it will be recalled that Abakumov, who had engaged in activities implying violation of the laws of the Soviet Union and who had sought to inflict upon the Soviet Union all kinds of damage, was executed in accordance with verdict handed down by the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Government presents its sincere regrets because of what has occurred and expresses its profound sympathy to the Swedish Government as well as to Raoul Wallenberg's relatives.

Translation: NMöller

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OFFICIAL COMMENTARY BY THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT TO THE SOVIET MEMORANDUM ON RAOUL WALLENBERG, ISSUED FEBRUARY 7, 1957.

The Soviet Government has drawn the conclusion from its investigations that Wallenberg died in a Russian prison in July 1947. The responsibility for his having been detained in prison and for the false information previously supplied is placed on the Soviet security organs and the Soviet Government expresses its sincere regrets for what has occurred.

Concerning the reply, it can be established that it is now being admitted on Russia's part that Wallenberg has been held imprisoned in the Soviet Union. In that respect, the reply tallies with the Swedish evidence material. It must be strongly regretted, however, that the reply contains such meager information. Nothing is said about the motives for Wallenberg's arrest or about his fate during the years that followed. We expect that if any new material should appear in the Soviet Union we shall immediately have it communicated to us.

To Raoul Wallenberg's mother and relatives, who for so many years have had to live in horrible uncertainty, the Russian reply must imply yet another hard blow. They have our profound sympathy.

Translation: NMöller

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